

COLUMBIAN MUSIC.

COMPOSITIONS OLD AND NEW WHICH GLORIFY THE DISCOVERER.

It was a subject of comment at the Centennial celebration of the inauguration of the first President of the United States of America in April, 1801, that had it not been for the city's citizens of German birth the affair would have passed off without a single distinctively musical feature. As it was the part that music played was scarcely impressive. Members of German singing societies to the number of 2,000 gave a monster concert in Madison Square Garden at which the only piece of music performed which had a patriotic or National note in it was "The Star Spangled Banner," the melody of which came to us from an old English drinking song. The Columbian celebration this week will be in a different case, but for this fact New-York is again indebted chiefly to its citizens of German nativity, and to the indomitable perseverance of a single American composer. This is not the place for criticism, least of all for sounding a note which will be discordant with the general feeling of rejoicing and National glorification, but it will do harm to say that when a review of the festivities is taken it will probably be found that the gratitude which will be felt toward the German contingent of New-York's population will be paired with a feeling of humiliation that the native exhibition in an artistic department better adapted than any other to give expression to festal feelings was so meager and unsatisfactory.

It is an extremely significant fact in connection with the anniversary of the discovery of the Western Continent that the period of time which has elapsed since Columbus' achievement compasses the whole history of music, as an art in the sense in which we now understand that term. Had the local committee wished it so it might have been an easy thing in a series of two or three concerts to have given an exposition of the growth of modern music from the moment in which it broke out of its chrysalis and became a thing of beauty and emotional potentiality down to to-day. The era of Columbus was the birth of artistic polyphony in the Church music of Josquin des Prez. The first century thereafter closed with the culmination of that style in Palestrina. The beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed the protest of the learned Florentine amateurs and antiquaries against scholastic polyphony and the rise of the art-form which developed into the open and in our day into the lyric drama. The romantic feeling which dominates music to-day was outside the pale of art four centuries ago, though it inspired the songs and dances of the common folk in the days of Columbus. To-day the instrumental composers and virtuous are ranked among the artists. Four hundred years ago they were handicapped who had no standing in law and whose status in the face of society and the Church was like that of the peripatetic jugglers and mountebanks. Like the strong players they were with one consent, And rogue by act of Parliament.

For their better protection they were banded together in imitation of the tradesmen's and mechanics' guilds. The church could make no use of their art, and the artist musician, so called, who was wholly a servant of the church, looked down upon the vulgar song and dance tunes with contempt. The patrician minstrel and trouvère had passed away to leave the cultivation of the art of secular song to the maturing and plebeian balladist. To-day the instrumental form is the one in which the loftiest and purest musical proclamations are made, and the vessels which contain the healthiest contents of mingled intellect and emotion are developments from the old plebeian dances.

In this marvelous work of development Italy, France, and Germany, whose children compose so large a factor in the sum of American population, have chiefly been instrumental. A single concert assigned to each nationality would suffice to make an eloquent exposition of the progress which has been made in music since Columbus "like a mist rose into towers." But it was not to be, and it seems as if the show-piece of the Bureau of Music of the World's Columbian Exposition will prevent any such feature from commanding the great international meeting at Chicago next year. Instead the Bureau of Music will lend its energies to the preservation of the Theodore Thomas Chicago Orchestra, speculation and marshaling of great crowds of Singers to do familiar things, as it masses and noise were all that is wanted at an affair designed originally to exhibit four centuries of progress in civilization and the elements which made for the enlightenment and improvement of humanity.

But turning from thought of what might have been to a contemplation of what is, the circumstance is to be recorded that four musical compositions are to be performed in New-York this week which were called into existence by the Columbian quadro-centenary. Two are works of large dimensions and ambitious purpose—the former the performance of which will call for a large musical apparatus, chorus, orchestra and solo voices. Besides these there will be an official march for military bands, to be played at the parades, and a religious piece, to be sung at the Catholic celebration in the Music Hall on Tuesday evening. The author of the march is Felix Jaeger; of the religious piece, Bruno Oscar Klein. Of the larger works the most significant from an artistic point of view is a German cantata, composed by Mr. D. McNamee, of Baltimore, in competition for a prize offered by a committee of German-American citizens, of which Mr. William Stetnoway is chairman. The other is a composition of a mixed character, which the composer, Mr. Elias G. Pratt, calls an allegory. It is composed in a dramatic vein, and enlists a number of personages besides a mixed chorus and orchestra. Under the auspices of the Committee of One Hundred, it will be performed at the Music Hall this evening. That it has a place on the programme is due wholly to the zeal and energy of Mr. Pratt, for the original plans of the committee contemplated nothing of the kind. Mr. Pratt organized a choir from singers who live for the greater part in Harbin and Stamford, Conn.

It is impossible to tell how often Columbus has been the subject of a musical celebration. An operatic figure he came into existence over a century ago, but he has not been as fortunate on the stage as his successor, Cortez, who may yet be seen and heard occasionally in Germany, and indeed, paid us a brief visit at the Metropolitan Opera House four years ago. There have been no less than eight Columbus operas, all of them Italian save one ("El Colón," by Carnicer, 1818), but the great Christopher has not survived as an operatic hero and the conqueror of Mexico is the only naturalized American with whom the contemporary world has a stage acquaintance. The operatic death of Columbus is as follows: "Colombus," by Fabris, 1759; "El Colón," by Morlaix, 1828; "Colombus," by the brothers Riedel, composers of dainty "Chilipe" & "La Comare," 1830; "Colombus," by Sandig, 1840; "Colombus," by Glambini, 1846; "Colombus," by Bottesini, 1847 (performed in Havana); "Colombus," by Barbiere, 1848. Years after Columbus had disappeared from the operatic stage he suddenly developed into a marvellously popular concert room figure. Less pictorially in a dress than in the gorgeous toga of a Spanish cavalier, he seems to have developed a musical style better adapted to the taste of the people of to-day. Yet he would seem from the fact that the majority of these concert compositions date within the last half dozen years that the later popularity is not wholly dissociated from the anniversary celebrations. Dudley Buck wrote a cantata entitled, "The Voyage of Columbus," in the spring of 1860. It was performed by the Apollo Club of Brooklyn in May of that year and again in February, 1861. It has also been heard in New-York and Leipzig, and now is said to be in permanent place in the repertoire of men's singing clubs that are able to command the help of an orchestra. The Bureau of Music of the World's Fair has set it down for performance in Chicago next summer, provided a meeting of glee clubs is brought about. Mr. Buck was his own librettist, and singularly enough, considering that he is a Connecticut Yankee, wrote his poem first in German and then translated it into his mother tongue. The cantata covers six nights scenes in the voyage of Columbus as detailed in Irving's narrative. They are: I, the consecration of the squadron on the eve of sailing in the Chapel of St. George at Palos; II, a fabled soliloquy of Columbus on the deck of the Santa Maria; III, the singing of the vesper hymn, "Ave Maris Stella"; on board the admiral's ship; IV, the discontent and mutiny; V, the love song of an officer, "In Distant Andalusia"; suggested by Columbus's remark that the weather was "like April in Andalusia"; VI, discovery and thanksgiving. The North American Scandenger, for its festival held in Milwaukee in July, 1882, offered a prize for a cantata for male chorus, soloes and orchestra, which was taken by C. Joseph Brumback, of Bonn, Germany, for a work entitled "Columbus." The judges were E. Catzenhausen, F. L. Bliter and Louis Maas, and the work achieved a notable success on its performance, as, indeed, it deserved, being a sonorous composition written with admirable appreciation of the music of man.

The new edition includes the four books, "Type," "Oneida," "Mohy Dick," and "White Jacket," which do their author most honor. They are all largely autobiographical, and are alive with a fire and vigor of narrative which we miss in Melville's attempts at ideal creation. "Type" has an introduction by the Editor, Mr. Arthur Stetnoway, an introduction which presents with taste and dignity the story of Melville's reserved life, with some interesting critical comments on his work. These books eminently deserve a permanent place in our literature; it is to be hoped that they will never again suffer from unmixed neglect.

"Stetka's Voyage" is a story far above the average in plot and treatment. It has a strong and admirably managed dramatic movement tending toward a climax which is as inevitable as the measured stroke of Time itself. Strange and powerful as is this book, it is in no sense sensational; the grim tragedy is the natural outcome of race, character and circumstances; and is set forth with a simplicity and self-restraint which greatly increase its effect. The author's style is capital—easy, lucid and polished.

"Capt'n Day" is a person of the noisy and hearty type—a good-hearted, hot-tempered man, with a lively disregard of grammatical rules. He is betrothed while he is making his fortune at sea. He accepts what for the Isle of Man is a fiscal culture, and ten days after marriage they quarrel and part on questions of manners and language. Do they retrace their wretched steps and end the honeymoon in happiness? The reader may guess. He will not take much interest in any one of the characters.

Mrs. Alexander is entertaining even when her plots are most improbable; and "The Share of the Fowler"

America for which we are almost wholly indebted to the Germans:

*Hier auf der Freiheit hell'gem Grund
Erbliehe süsser Sang,
Endinge frei'ns Herz und Mund
Der rebhafte Herbergh;
Gesenge voll von heitiger Gluth,
Voll starker Wogenpracht,
Sie gleichen deiner Stromen Fluth
An Fuelle und an Pracht.
So weit din freies Banner wallt
Am fernesten Gestad—
Der Strom des Hedes wilderhaft
Und weicht zu grasser Thot.
Es braust fort mit mächtigem Klang
Der Freiheit stolzer Hochgesang!*

Three years after the publication of Herr Beethoven's prize composition, another German, Wilhelm Sturm, published a shorter work, entitled "Columbus's Last Night," in Berlin. It is dedicated to a New York conductor, Frank van der Stucken, and its musical content can be guessed from the title. Discontent, doubt, despair, the discoverer, and an invocation to Liberty are its contents. Whether it has ever been performed in this country we are unable to say. Two other Columbus works by Germans, however, have been heard here at concerts of the German Liederkranz, once, a cantata, by Ferdinand Hummel, was performed on January 30, 1857, the other a cantata by Heinrich Zedler, the present conductor of the Liederkranz, at the Music Hall on November 29, of last year. Herr Hummel's work is written for mixed chorus, solo and orchestra; Herr Zedler's for men's voices, solo and orchestra. The conductor of the Liederkranz is one of the most popular of living composers for male choruses, but his cantata is guilty of an amusing anachronism in making use of the melody of "Yankee Doodle."

Lieder also composed some years ago a superb chorus, with orchestral accompaniment, called "Heil Columbus," Nothing makes his hopeless pestilence tolerable but its vivid atmosphere of reality, the art with which this judgment of life is drawn. The "general's daughter" has passed to the land of shades, and does not appear in the book at all save in her journal and in the reminiscences of those who have loved her; the real heroine is the young girl who in sorrow and disenchantment struggles toward the blest of peace, usefulness and content held up by the dead. The chapter in which, with illusions gone, she gives up the fight, is one of stern power. The translation, we may note, is not altogether satisfactory.

Miss Yonge's new book is a highly moral tale, intended apparently for the instruction of maid-servants. The heroine is an extremely pleasant housemaid, who refuses to marry her true love because he insists on keeping a "public." of course the youth comes to grief, and when properly convinced of the error of his ways is restored in penance to love and soberness. The book does not belong to literature.

The story which gives its title to Colonel Johnston's new volume is a story of the old South, of the days when masculine supremacy was more emphatic than at present, when all that a woman possessed was legally her husband's, and when the Apostle Paul's declarations concerning women were often heard in the churches. How Mr. Forster died in his foolish old age with his beloved wife told in the author's quaint and most whimsical fashion, but it is a noteworthy fact that the finest musical tribute that has yet been offered to the names of the discoverer is a symphonic poem for orchestra, which was heard in the United States nearly a quarter of a century ago. Its composer is J. Albert, a Bohemian who after a life of struggle reached a comfortable haven as Capellmeister in Stuttgart, nearly thirty years ago. His symphonic poem, "Columbus," composed in 1864, made him famous throughout Germany, and was the opening number at the great German Saengerfest held in Cincinnati four years later, when the singer from all parts of the country numbered nearly if not quite 30,000. It is a superb composition, marvelously picturesque and stirring.

It would be manifestly unfair to speak of the music of the two cantatas which will be given in their first hearing in connection with the local celebration this week. A brief description of their form and potential contents must suffice, for though an option can be formed by reading the printed page in music, after all it is only hearing that is believing. Mr. Silas Pratt, the composer of the English Allegory, came to New York several years ago from Chicago. He is sons, patriotic, and public-spirited, and the measure of his energy may be taken from the fact that he succeeded in permeating the local community to include the production of an original musical work in the programme of the festivities. Like Mr. Zedler at the German concert on Tuesday evening, but it is a noteworthy fact that the finest musical tribute that has yet been offered to the names of the discoverer is a symphonic poem for orchestra, which was heard in the United States nearly a quarter of a century ago. Its composer is J. Albert, a Bohemian who after a life of struggle reached a comfortable haven as Capellmeister in Stuttgart, nearly thirty years ago. His symphonic poem, "Columbus," composed in 1864, made him famous throughout Germany, and was the opening number at the great German Saengerfest held in Cincinnati four years later, when the singer from all parts of the country numbered nearly if not quite 30,000. It is a superb composition, marvelously picturesque and stirring.

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